

1 Introduced by Council Member Morgan:
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4 **RESOLUTION 2023-382**

5 A RESOLUTION HONORING AND COMMENDING RITA REAGAN
6 FOR HER OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP AND EFFORTS TO
7 PRESERVE AND REVITALIZE THE NORMAN STUDIOS MOVIE
8 PRODUCTION COMPLEX IN ARLINGTON; PROVIDING AN
9 EFFECTIVE DATE.
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11 **WHEREAS**, Rita Reagan, a graduate of Eastern Kentucky University,
12 the University of North Florida and the University of Florida, is a
13 lifelong educator. She taught English for the U.S. Army at an adult
14 education center in Germany for a year and taught in South Florida
15 for several years before arriving in Jacksonville. Over the next 30
16 years, Ms. Regan served with the Duval County Schools in a wide
17 variety of capacities from teaching to grant-writing to program
18 development; and

19 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Reagan has also devoted decades of her time and
20 energies to leading and supporting many community organizations. She
21 is a founder and board member of Old Arlington Inc., a board member
22 and archivist for the Springfield Improvement Association, a founder
23 of the Springfield Heritage Museum and Education Center, a board
24 member of The Bridge: A Full Service Youth Center; a board member for
25 the Epilepsy Foundation, a member of the Hogan's Creek Greenway Park
26 Task Force, and many others; and

27 **WHEREAS**, Rita Reagan has most recently devoted nearly two
28 decades of intensive efforts to lead the charge to preserve and
29 revitalize the Norman Film Studio complex on Arlington Road, one of
30 the last remaining vestiges of Jacksonville's heritage as a preeminent
31 film production city in the early days of movie-making; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Richard E. Norman purchased the former Eagle Film City
2 Studios on Arlington Road in 1920 and made silent films there for the
3 next 8 years, primarily for Black audiences featuring all-Black casts
4 portraying Black life and stories in positive ways. Norman Studio
5 is the last "race film" studio known to remain intact in the country
6 and is a reminder of the role Jacksonville played as the "Winter Film
7 Capital of the World" from 1907 to the early 1920's before the movie
8 industry moved to California; and

9 **WHEREAS**, Rita Reagan spearheaded the campaign to convince the
10 City to purchase the Norman Studio property in 2003, and to reunify,
11 restore and reopen the National Historic Landmark property as a museum
12 and event center; and

13 **WHEREAS**, her concerted efforts and leadership over these many
14 years have paid off and, with a combination of City appropriations
15 and grant funding, the initial phase of the Norman Studio complex
16 restoration is nearing completion and will soon open for the public's
17 education and enjoyment; now therefore

18 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

19 **Section 1.** The City Council hereby honors and commends Rita
20 Reagan for her decades of tireless efforts to preserve and revitalize
21 the historically significant Norman Studios silent film production
22 complex on Arlington Road as a reminder of Jacksonville's prominence
23 in the history of movie making. Her exceptional leadership and dogged
24 determination have brought the first phase of the project to a
25 successful completion and the City and the residents of Jacksonville
26 are grateful for all her efforts.

27 **Section 2. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become
28 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective
29 without the Mayor's signature.
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1 Form Approved:

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3 /s/ Mary E. Staffopoulos

4 Office of General Counsel

5 Legislation Prepared By: Jeff Clements, City Council Research

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